



rivers&trails

National
Park
Service



rivers, trails, and conservation assistance program

BROWNSVILLE RAIL-TRAIL

Project Goal

To construct a bicycle/pedestrian trail, linking downtown Brownsville and Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Site, which offers numerous benefits to the Brownsville community including recreation, education, and non-motorized transportation.

Background

Brownsville, Texas is a mid-sized community at the “very tip” of Texas, on the border with Mexico and just inland from the Gulf of Mexico. Its residents enjoy a sub-tropical climate and a rich cultural history. Part of this history, the U.S.-Mexican War, is remembered at a National Park unit – the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Site (NHS).

In 1999, the City of Brownsville acquired an abandoned stretch of Southern Pacific rail line for future use as a hike and bike trail. The City applied for and was awarded Transportation Enhancement Funds to construct the roughly eight mile trail that would link downtown Brownsville, the Cameron County Courthouse, Dean Porter Park, Gladys Porter Zoo, four schools, numerous neighborhoods, “resacas”(wetlands), open spaces, and the Palo Alto Battlefield NHS. The trail will be the first of its kind in Brownsville and has generated community enthusiasm. The City of Brownsville and the National Park Service have created a partnership to develop interpretive and educational programs along the trail. The interpretive themes to be highlighted include:

- Border landscape/ native and migratory wildlife.
- The Rio Grande and the resacas.
- Medicinal and edible plants/ Folk traditions, beliefs, tales, and songs

- Diminishing open space.
- Native and migratory wildlife.
- Pre-Hispanic history.
- Hispanic history.
- Numerous military conflicts.

National Park Service Role

RTCA is facilitating the planning process, helping project partners accomplish the necessary steps to development of a trail-wide interpretive program. RTCA assisted project partners in identifying and involving stakeholder groups, resulting in the formation of a public/private multi-disciplinary interpretive planning team. Project partners have looked to RTCA to create opportunities for public input and involvement. RTCA has also assisted the project in securing sponsorships, grant funds and other sources of assistance.

The trail will accommodate many types of users.



continued

BROWNSVILLE RAIL-TRAIL

Project Results to Date

- Trail designs developed by professional design firm.
- Formation of a public-private multidisciplinary interpretive planning team.
- Consensus development of primary interpretive themes.
- "Seed" contributions made toward specific elements of the interpretive plan.

Contacts

Douglas Murphy
Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Site
1623 Central Blvd, Suite 213
Brownsville, TX 78520-8326
Ph: 956-541-2785
Fax: 956-541-6356

Mark Lund
City of Brownsville
Planning and Community Development
P.O. Box 911
Brownsville, TX 78520
Ph. 956-548-6150
Fax 956-548-6144

Marta de la Garza Newkirk
National Park Service
300 E. 8th Street, Room 578
Austin, TX 78701-3255
Ph: 512-916-5162
Fax: 512-916-5165
Email: marta_newkirk_de_la_garza@nps.gov

Project Partners

- City of Brownsville - Owner/manager of existing and future trail/greenway corridors and facilities
- Palo Alto Battlefield NHS- Owner/manager of National Park land, source of assistance for interpretive and educational programs
- Texas Parks & Wildlife Department – Funding source and source of assistance for interpretive and educational programs
- Brownsville Community Foundation – Sponsor of interpretive waysides and facilities along the trail
- Brownsville Historical Association, Museums of Port Isabel – Non-profit advocacy organizations, source of assistance for interpretive and educational programs

Abandoned Rail Corridor



300 E. 8th St.
Room 578
Austin, TX 78701-3255

www.nps.gov/rtca
P: 512-916-5163
F: 512-916-5165